

Traffic Safety News & Facts For Employers November 2002

- The nation's highway safety and crash data experts have completed their final revision of the Model Minimum Uniform Crash Criteria (MMUCC) that states are encouraged to use in developing motor vehicle crash reports, completed by police at the scene of a motor vehicle crash. The motor vehicle crash report uses a numerical coding system to describe various characteristics of the crash, as well as capture statistical information about the vehicles and people involved. MMUCC represents a "model" minimum crash data set, with specific data elements and attributes for each data element. The Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA), NHTSA, FHWA, and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) jointly developed MMUCC with collaboration from numerous state and local agencies. MMUCC's purpose is to provide a guideline for states to help them standardize data collected at crash scenes. This information is critical, as it is used by local, state, and federal policy makers to identify and prioritize highway safety problem areas and to develop laws and strategies aimed at reducing deaths and injuries. Standardized data also helps facilitate inter-state comparisons so that policymakers can better address common highway safety issues.
- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) announced it has issued a final rule to begin a program for the annual rating of child safety seats based on their ease of use by consumers. The agency also announced it is launching a pilot testing program in simulated crash situations to better determine how well child safety seats perform, as well as pilot test in the New Car Assessment Program (NCAP) to determine how well vehicles protect children. In early 2003, NHTSA will begin posting ease-of-use ratings for child safety seats on the

agency's website (www.nhtsa.gov). NHTSA will also publish a brochure listing all of its ease-of-use ratings next year. Under the new rating system, child safety seats, including booster seats, will each be given an overall ease-of-use rating at the "A," "B" or "C" level. Such letter grades will also be used to rate seats in each of five categories:

- Whether the seat is pre-assembled or requires assembly after purchase.
 - Clarity of labeling attached to the seat.
 - Clarity of written instructions on the seat's proper use.
 - Ease of installation of the seat in a vehicle.
 - Ease of securing a child correctly in the seat.
- In Arizona, individuals who have guns in their vehicles are more likely to engage in aggressive and illegal behaviors behind the wheel, according to researchers from the Harvard School of Public Health and Northern Arizona University. Survey respondents were asked if they, in anger, had:
- Personally made obscene gestures, cursed, or shouted at other drivers
 - Impeded another driver's progress with their vehicles
 - Aggressively followed another driver too closely
 - Brandished a gun at another driver

Overall, 11 percent of drivers always or sometimes carried a gun with them in their vehicles; 34 percent reported having made obscene gestures, cursed, or shouted angrily, and 28 percent reported aggressively following or blocking other drivers with their vehicles. Less than 1 percent of drivers reported ever threatening another driver with a gun. For more information on *'Road Rage' in Arizona: Armed and Dangerous*, contact Elsevier Science at 212-633-3730.

- A Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) is urging the Canadian government to improve traffic safety by designing a "fatigue-fighting infrastructure plan" that acts on recommendations made by the Canadian Automobile Association (CAA) Ontario. The CAA Ontario plan calls for shorter distances between rest areas, increased parking for trucks, and better signage. Spokesman Mike Beauchesne explained, "Traffic congestion and long working hours can create fatigue on the road from the office or home. Motorists need better access to rest stops where they can stretch out in a relaxing setting, take a washroom break, or catch a 20-minute nap." A 2000 report by Ontario's transportation ministry suggested that up to 27,000 motor vehicle collisions might have involved a driver who fell asleep.
- NHTSA is seeking comments on what future role the agency should take in the continued development and installation of Event Data Recorders (EDRs) in motor vehicles. EDRs collect vehicle and occupant-based crash information. Information recorded by EDRs aid investigations of the causes of crashes and injury mechanisms and make it possible to better define safety problems. This information can ultimately be used to improve motor vehicle safety, according to an article in the *Federal Register*. To learn more about the devices, NHTSA has sponsored two working groups, used data from EDRs in crash investigation, and conducted research and development. For more information, call Dr. William Fan, NHTSA Office of Crashworthiness Standards at 202-366-4955.
- NHTSA issued a notice of proposed rule making to develop a dynamic test on motor vehicle rollovers in order to create a consumer information program. This action is required by the Transportation Recall Enhancement, Accountability, and

Documentation (TREAD) Act. NHTSA evaluated numerous driving maneuver tests for dynamic rollover consumer information program. Based on these tests, the agency is proposing alternative methods for using the dynamic rollover test results in its consumer information for vehicle rollover resistance, according to a notice in the *Federal Register*. For more information, call Patrick Boyd, NHTSA Office of Safety Performance Standards at 202-366-6346.

- Drivers using hands-free cell phones drove faster than drivers who talked on phones without the devices, according to a new study by the University of Sydney, Australia. The reason was that drivers using hands-free phones felt more relaxed. The study used a driving simulator to test the road skills of drivers-with and without the distraction of using a cell phone. Forty-eight percent admitted to talking on hand-held phones while driving, which is illegal in Australia, while 60 percent said they used hands-free devices, which are allowed by law. The study also revealed that 30 percent of participants used text messaging while driving.
- During *Put the Brakes on Fatalities Day*, the Roadway Safety Foundation (RSF) renewed its call to reduce highway-related deaths by improving roadway safety design features. This includes the installation of wider lanes and medians, better signs, dedicated turning lanes, rumble strips, improved pavement markings, as well as the removal of ice and snow in a timely manner. In nearly 30 percent of all fatal crashes in 2000, drivers were either exceeding posted speed limits or driving too fast for conditions. These types of speed-related crashes accounted for over 12,000 of the nearly 42,000 lives lost. The goal of *Put the Brakes on Fatalities Day* that occurs each year on October 10th, is to have a day without any traffic-related deaths.